

## **Capital Spend and Project Approvals**

### **Appendix 3 - Assurance Framework**

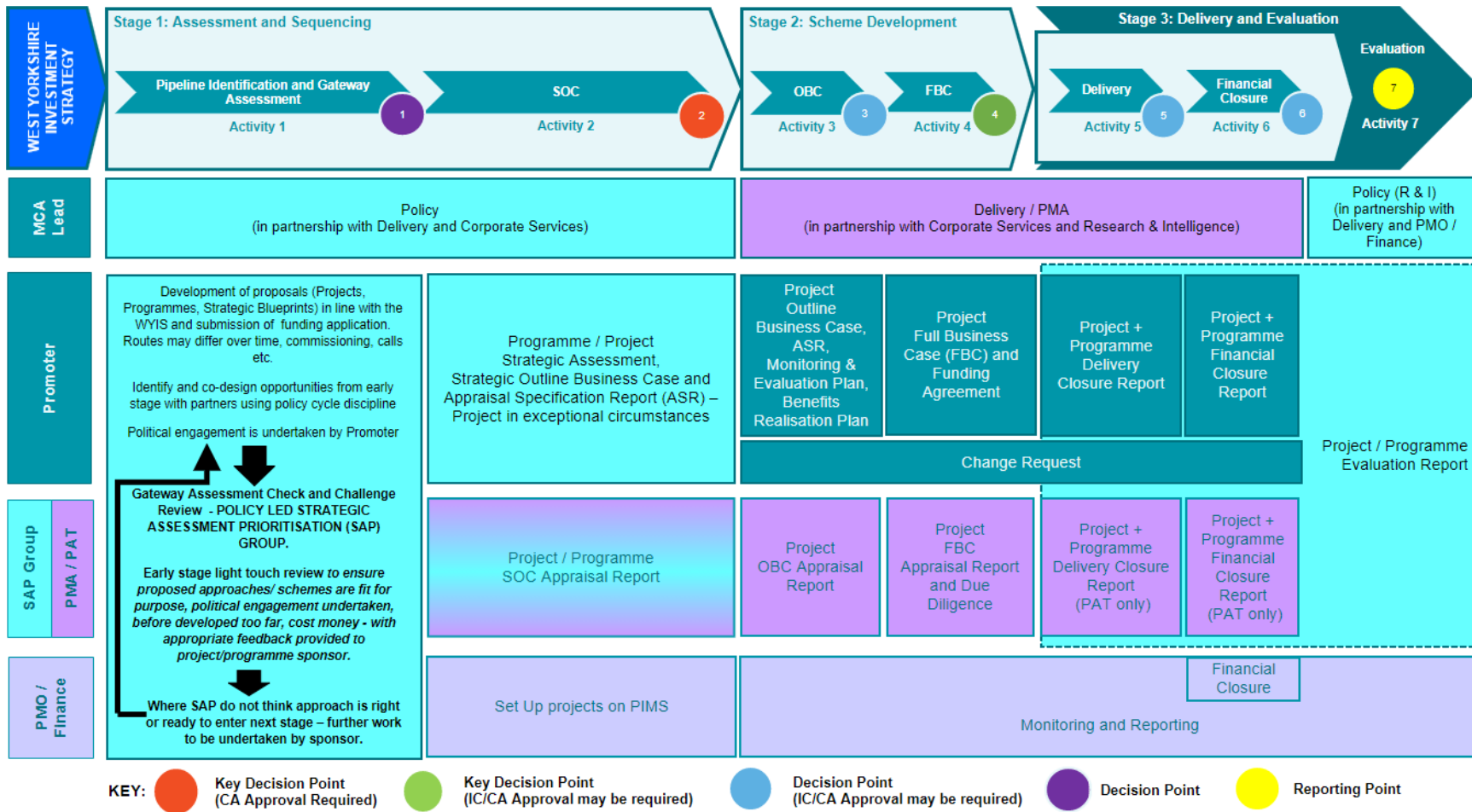
#### **1 Assurance Framework**

- 1.1 The Combined Authority's Assurance Framework was developed in 2015 as part of the Growth Deal with Government. Its purpose is to ensure that the necessary systems and processes are in place to manage funding effectively, and to ensure the successful delivery of the Strategic Economic Framework (SEF) ambitions. Its focus is to ensure that necessary practices and standards are implemented to provide the Government, Combined Authority, the Leeds Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and local partners with assurance that decisions over funding (and the means by which these decisions are implemented) are proper, transparent and deliver value for money. It covers all projects and programmes funded from Government or local sources that flow through the LEP and Combined Authority.
- 1.2 The Assurance Framework must be reviewed annually as stipulated by Government, however, due to the West Yorkshire Devolution Deal, the Assurance Framework has been subject to an extensive in-year review for the Mayoral arrangements to be adopted.
- 1.3 This review has now taken place and government approved the updated Assurance Framework, which was implemented on 3 February 2021. Decision making remains the same in the new Assurance Framework, i.e. approval is required at Combined Authority (CA) for all programmes and projects at least once in their lifetime and this is usually at decision point 2 (Strategic Outline Case). The Assurance Pathway and Approval Route is also set at this point.

#### **Assurance Process**

- 1.4 The new Assurance Process is set out below:

New



- 1.5 The new process includes the West Yorkshire Investment Strategy (WYIS) and removes the Full Business Case with finalised costs (FBC+) stage. There are no other significant changes from the previous process, and there will be little effect on the Combined Authority's existing funding programmes and projects.
- 1.6 The process still retains the same flexibility, in that each project or programme will be set a bespoke approval pathway and approval route to be followed. This may be to delegate decisions to Investment Committee (IC), Managing Director (MD) etc. or it may be that certain decision point approvals are not required, or that bid documents to other government departments can be utilised. Furthermore, development costs can be funded at decision point 1 and beyond.
- 1.7 Activity 3 (OBC) and Activity 4 (FBC) remain however, the FBC+ (or previous Activity 5) is not now required. Instead, at FBC (Decision Point 4), PAT sets conditions that must be met before full approval of funding is given and the project has Approval to Proceed to Delivery (Activity 5).
- 1.8 In line with the recently revised Green Book, in assessing value for money, a stronger emphasis can now be placed on the strategic case and how the strategic objectives and priorities of the Combined Authority will be met through the delivery of the project. This might for example include, but not limited to, supporting the climate change and good growth agenda (the Combined Authority aims to achieve net-zero by 2038), supporting an increase in active mode and public transport use and / or supporting / accelerating housing development. The specific approach will be determined on a programme by programme basis as funding and investment streams come forward.
- 1.9 At Decision Point 5 a Delivery Closure Report is required, which is substantially the same as the previous draft project closure report.
- 1.10 At Activity 6 a Financial Closure Report is needed. This is the period when defects are made good and final accounts are agreed.
- 1.11 Activity 7 Evaluation will be managed by the Combined Authority's Research & Intelligence team. This is a reporting point not a decision point and takes place when the programme (or project in some circumstances), is completed. It includes an evaluation of the benefits, outcomes and economic impact compared to the overall programme objectives set out in the SOC. Insights and learning from the evaluation will also be fed back into policy and strategy in order to inform the design and development of future programmes and schemes. Interim evaluations may also be undertaken as required as set out in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

## **2 Future assurance and approval route**

- 2.1 The tables for each scheme in the main report outline the proposed assurance process and corresponding approval route for the scheme. The assurance pathway sets out the decision points which the scheme must progress through

and will reflect the scale and complexity of the scheme. The approval route indicates which committees or officers will make both a recommendation and approval of the scheme at each decision point. A delegated decision can only be made by the Managing Director if this has received prior approval from the Combined Authority.

### **3 Tolerances**

- 3.1 In order for the scheme to follow the assurance pathway and approval route that is proposed in this report, it should remain within the tolerances outlined for each scheme. If these tolerances are exceeded the scheme needs to return to Investment Committee and/or the Combined Authority for further consideration.

### **4 Transition**

- 4.1 There will be a transition period to the new Assurance Framework due to business cases being submitted and appraised prior to the new Assurance Framework being approved by government. Schemes progressing under the previous process will be highlighted in the report.